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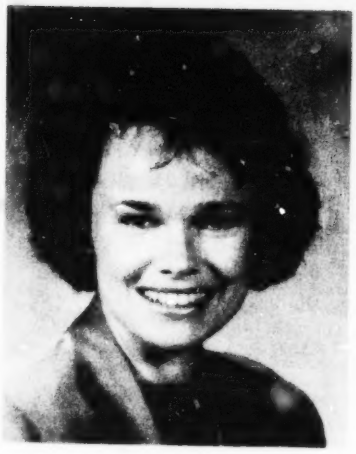
POLICY STATEMENT
ON
NATIVE EDUCATION
IN
ALBERTA

March 1987

To the people of Alberta



The Government of Alberta is committed to ensuring that all young Albertans receive an excellent education. Our commitment is to encourage the continued development of a culture that respects and cherishes individuality and individual initiative. We want to encourage competence, self-confidence, a sense of responsibility and a determination to contribute to the prosperity and the well-being of the Native community and all Albertans. One way to meet this commitment is through an education system which is designed to respond to the needs of Alberta students, which recognizes the importance of their cultural heritages, and which helps them to grow, to learn, and to become productive members of Alberta society.

This policy reflects an integrated approach to Native education in the delivery of programs and the development of curriculum. It promotes a partnership among Native people, school boards and Alberta Education to ensure that excellence is achieved.

The policy is a positive statement of this government's commitment toward ensuring that Native children have the opportunity to benefit from an education which meets their needs. The policy will also ensure that Native people, especially parents, have an opportunity to help guide and shape the education of their children. Finally, the policy will ensure that all students, Native and non-Native, have an opportunity to learn about the history and contributions of Native people to Alberta.

On behalf of the Government of Alberta, I would like to express my deep appreciation to the many Native people and various groups across the province who contributed so significantly to the development of this policy. Their advice, their suggestions, and their commitment to the education of their children were essential to the development of an effective policy for Native education.

Alberta is leading the way in bringing Native people to work with school boards to improve Native education. This policy provides an incentive which can be looked upon with pride by all Albertans. As a provincial government we recognize and are committed to fulfilling our leadership role. Together we can accomplish this task.

Yours sincerely,

Nancy J. Betkowski
Minister of Education

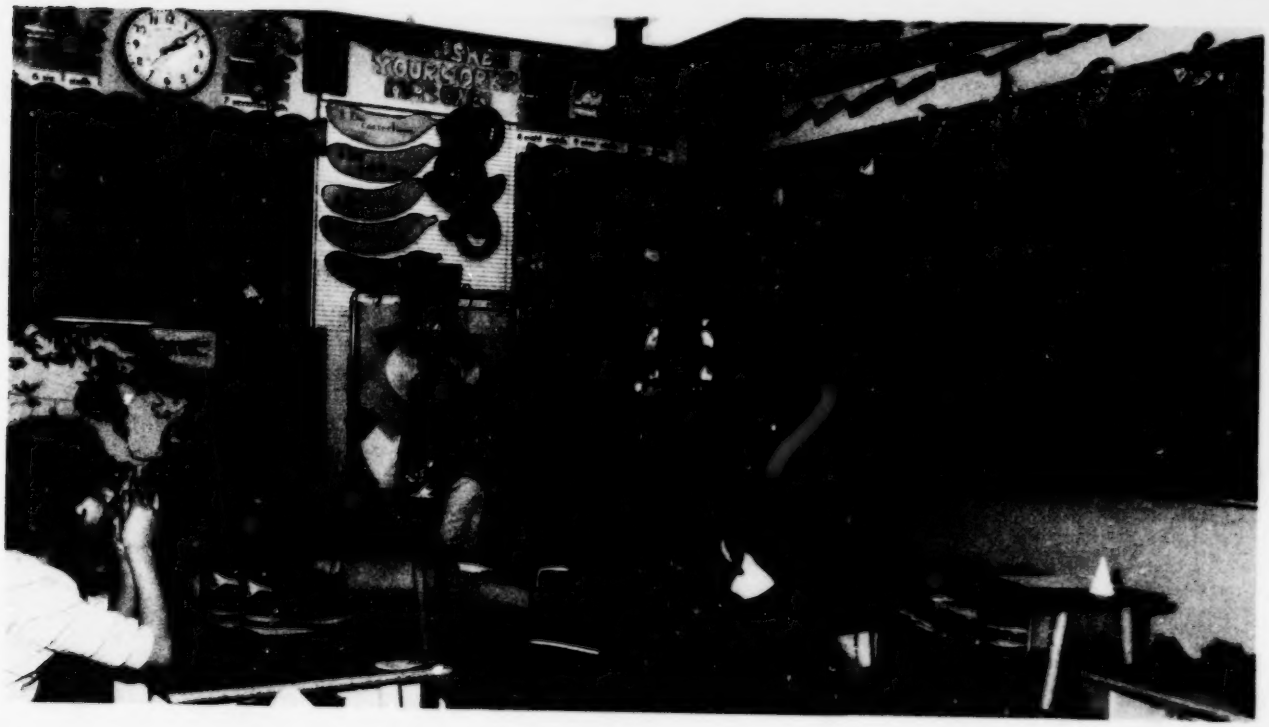
Foreword

Over 23,000 Native students attend provincial schools. They represent Metis, Non-Status, and Treaty Indians with distinct histories, cultures, and life-styles which contribute to the educational challenge. These young Albertans are proud of their Native heritage, are self-confident and motivated. They want to learn in order to assume responsibility and make positive contributions to society. They need an education that builds on their particular strengths and educational achievements. These young Albertans want an education that prepares them to meet the challenges of the future.

In November 1984, the Honourable David King, former Minister of Education, established the Native Education Project Team to develop a Native Education Policy as a foundation for improving the delivery of quality education to Native students and their communities. The Project Team was also established to co-ordinate the development of educational materials and resources suitable for use by both Native and non-Native students.

Dr. Ralph Sabey was appointed Director of the Project. Other members included Pearl Calahasen, Merv Kowalchuk, and Bernie Makokis. In March 1985, Marjorie Dressyman from the Federal Department of Indian Affairs joined the Project Team for four months.

The Native Education Project Team met with Native people throughout the



province. The Team listened to the people's concerns and views on the current education of their children. These views are reported in *Native Education in Alberta: Alberta Native People's Views on Native Education*, 1985.

The discussions with Native people, the information gathered from 180 different meetings, and the letters, and papers submitted have formed the basis for Alberta Education's Native Education Policy Statement.

The Native Education Policy Statement complements other current actions taken by the Government of Alberta, such as the Secondary Education Review, to provide each student enrolled in a provincial school with a high standard of education that addresses his or her individual needs and abilities. The Policy Statement also complements initiatives taken to foster tolerance and understanding between peoples and pride in our multi-cultural society.

The Native Education Policy Statement presents a provincial government response to the concerns of Native people. The document outlines the actions Alberta Education has taken and will take to address the needs of Native students and their communities. These actions provide:

- ways in which the educational needs and personal aspirations of Native students can be met;
- opportunities for Native people to help shape the education of their children, and help young people reach their potential;
- opportunities for all students in schools throughout Alberta to develop an awareness and appreciation of Native cultures and their many contributions to society.

This policy applies only to Provincial schools and not to Band operated or Federally administered schools located on Indian reserves.

The Policy statement will be discussed with Native people. The results of these discussions will assist in the development and delivery of Native Education in Alberta.

What is the Purpose of Native Education?

The aim of Native Education is to develop the knowledge, the skills, and the positive attitudes of Native students so that they will be self-confident, capable, and committed to setting goals, to making informed choices, and acting in ways that will improve their own lives, and the life of both Native and non-Native communities throughout Alberta.

- Alberta Education recognizes that Native education must be attuned to the diverse needs, cultures, and life-styles of Native students so that they can build on their self-esteem, and gain a better understanding of themselves through the study of their own heritage and cultures.

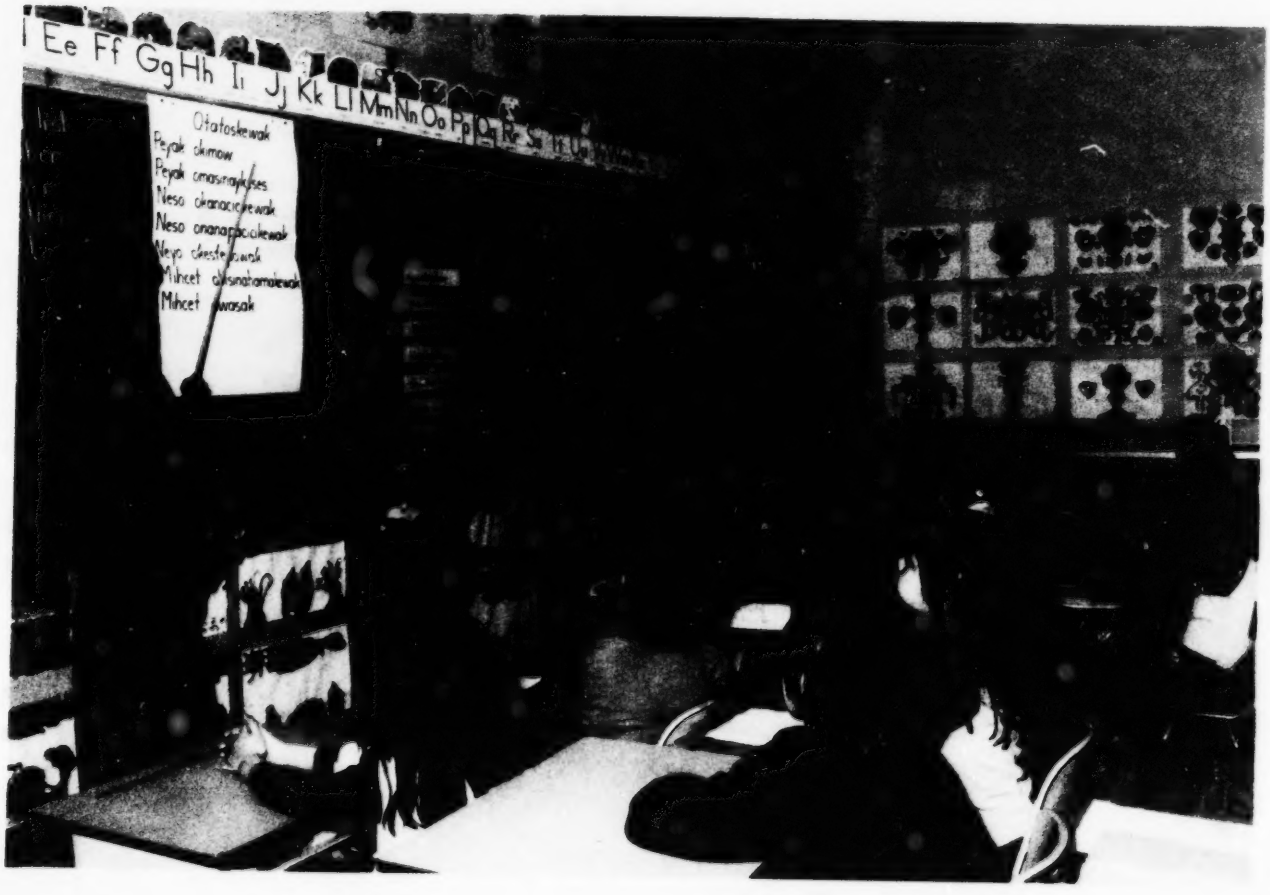
- Alberta Education recognizes that Native histories, cultures, and life-styles must be included in the studies taken by Alberta students, so that they can benefit from the values and lifestyles of Native cultures.
- Alberta Education recognizes that conditions on the delivery of Native education must be flexible enough to meet the different needs of school communities throughout the province.
- Alberta Education recognizes that Native people must be involved in school activities. They must have opportunities to help guide and influence the education of their children.
- Alberta Education recognizes the importance of partnerships, and strong working relationships among schools, Native people, and the Alberta Government. Through partnerships, the quality of education provided to Native students in Alberta schools can be enhanced.

Alberta Education, in partnership with Native communities and school boards, is committed to addressing and taking action on the issues voiced by Native people and educators. The Government of Alberta proposes the following policy for guiding Native Education in Alberta.

Policy

Alberta Education supports the development and delivery of programs and services which will:

- provide enhanced and equal opportunities for Native students to acquire the quality of education traditional in Alberta;
- challenge Native students to learn and perform to the best of their abilities;
- provide opportunities for Native students to study and experience their own and other Native cultures and lifestyles;
- provide opportunities for Native people to help guide and shape the education of their children;
- provide opportunities for students in Alberta's schools to recognize and appreciate Native cultures, and their many contributions to our province and society.



What Will Be Taught in Schools?

Schools offering educational opportunities to Native students must strive to meet and enrich the students' abilities, interests, and talents. Schools must stress what is vital and important in Native lifestyles to enhance the self-esteem and motivation of Native students.

It is essential that subjects taught to Alberta students include aspects of Native heritage, views, and values so that Native and non-Native students can reach a better understanding of each other. Thus, Alberta students will better appreciate the diversity and strength of our multi-cultural society.

Alberta Education has already taken action to improve studies for Native students. In 1984, the Native Education Project Team, Native organizations, and Alberta school boards began to review, develop, and make available through Alberta Education classroom materials used by students and teachers. These materials accurately and vibrantly tell about Native cultures and their many contributions to society.

Alberta Education is committed to guiding schools toward meeting the particular and diverse needs of Native students, and will:

- Continue to work with Native people and school boards to develop classroom materials that will complement subjects taken by students, and will encourage schools to use them as basic and recommended learning resources.
- Include and highlight aspects of Native heritage, cultures, and life-styles in the studies that are to be taken by students in Alberta.
- Ensure that the programs offered and that the materials developed for students are consistent with new directions taken by Alberta Education, such as the Secondary Education Review.
- Support the development and delivery of extended Native studies for students who wish to explore and experience Native traditions and life-styles.
- Assist school boards and Native people to develop programs for the teaching of Native languages.
- Encourage school boards to assist those students who need special or additional instruction in English as a Second Language.
- Assist school boards and Native people to develop and deliver enrichment programs for exceptional children including the gifted and the talented.
- Assist school boards and the Native community to develop and deliver programs and services that will address the needs of students in isolated communities.

How Can Native Education Best Be Delivered to Native Students?

The delivery of Native education must consider the cultures, lifestyles, and special abilities of Native students and the particular communities in which they live.

Educators are models and mentors for all students. Educators should be aware of and understand just how their students live and think so that they can better assist them to reach their potential. The participation of Native home-school-community liaison workers, Native school counsellors, Native teachers and teacher aides, and Native elders is an essential part of improving the learning opportunities for Native students.

Enrichment programs and technology must be used to the best advantage so that Native students living in isolated Alberta communities receive the same quality of educational opportunities offered to students in other parts of the province. School boards must be responsive to the needs of their local communities. School boards must settle matters in a way that is appropriate for local needs and for the educational benefit of their students.

Alberta Education is committed to guiding the delivery of education towards meeting the educational needs of Native students, and will:

- Alberta Education will support school boards in the development and delivery of programs and services that will address the needs of Native students and their communities throughout the province.

- Provide help in the pre-service and inservice of Alberta's teachers and administrators to strengthen their awareness of Native cultures and life-styles so that they can better assist Native students.
- Recognize that Native people viewed by their community as fluent in a Native language are qualified to offer oral instruction in Native languages under the general supervision of a certified teacher.
- Encourage school boards to employ and involve Native administrators, teachers, teacher aides, and other Native people in the education of Native students.
- Provide assistance to school boards for assessing and interpreting accurately the standardized tests written by Native students.
- Encourage the extension of programs (for example, high school studies) and services in isolated communities through the use of technology and through innovative programs which enhance students' skills and abilities.
- Encourage school boards to meet the unique needs of each school community according to the current provisions of the School Act.
- Where resources exist, provide services for evaluating schools, educational programs, and teachers for permanent certification to Band-operated schools when they request such services through a Band Council resolution.
- Encourage school boards to provide services that enhance opportunities for schools and Native communities to work together, such as hot lunch programs where appropriate.

Building Partnerships

Excellence in Native education can be achieved through the sharing of educational responsibilities, through strong community partnerships that involve Native people, school boards, and the Alberta Government.

Native parents and community members must accept responsibility for representing the educational interests of their young people. Schools offering education to Native students must accept responsibility for providing educational opportunities that will meet their individual needs, and for providing them with particular experiences that will foster a desire for learning.

Alberta Education accepts responsibility for providing leadership, and for helping Native people and schools throughout the province to prepare Native students to succeed in meeting the challenges of the future.

Alberta Education is committed to fostering meaningful partnerships, and will:

- Encourage and support opportunities for Native people to participate in decision-making that will affect the education of Native students.
- Consult with Native people to ensure that their views are considered at all levels of decision-making on the education of their children.
- Encourage and assist the development of local school advisory councils.
- Encourage school boards to negotiate the terms of tuition agreements with Indian Band Councils.

- Explore the possibility of Indian Band representation on school boards.
- Where a tuition agreement exists, provide School Foundation Program Grants to school boards on behalf of all Native students, including non-Status students attending schools administered by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs or Indian Bands. These funds will not be available on behalf of Treaty Indians residing on reserves.
- Work with school boards, Community and Alberta Vocational Centers, colleges, and universities to see that Native students who leave school early, or who continue after high school receive the best possible opportunities to continue their education.
- Encourage Community and Alberta Vocational Centers, colleges, universities, and Alberta Advanced Education to provide training for Native para-professionals (teacher aides), and to provide training through outreach studies and services for Native professionals who would not otherwise be able to develop their skills.
- Through the Native Education Project Team, continue to guide Native education in the province, continue to consult with Native people, and continue to act on the concerns expressed by Native people on the education of their children.

Conclusion

The future of young people and the future of this province are inseparable. Together with Native people, Alberta Education has made a commitment to Native students to provide them with enhanced opportunities to learn, to grow, to succeed, to become confident and responsible Albertans proud of their Native heritage.

Alberta Education will continue to help Native people and school boards throughout the province to address the challenges involved in preparing young Albertans for the future.